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## UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT



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## HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN FORT WORTH

When Fort Worth was incorporated as a City in 1873, virtually the entire city was contained within the area currently called the Central Business District. The commercial Downtown was concentrated along Commerce, Weatherford, and Houston streets and extended south for several blocks on Houston and Main streets.

The appearance of Downtown Fort Worth in the 1880's was a classic Old West town. Commercial buildings were generally one-and two-story wood frame and brick structures, many with false fronts and shed-roofed porches covering wooden sidewalks. The commercial core was laid out on a traditional grid with a residential district extending south of the Texas & Pacific Railroad tracks and an industrial district in an arc along the railroad tracks to the south and east of Downtown. Residential districts continued to be built to the east and west of Downtown and northward along the Samuels Avenue and the bluffs of the Trinity River. By the end of the 1880's, cattle, livestock, trading, land development, railroads, oil, and a diversifying economy transformed Fort Worth from a military outpost to a vibrant trading center for points west.

From its early days, Fort Worth continued to develop like most cities in Texas. The early teens and 1920's saw expansion of the suburbs, while skyscrapers and automobiles changed the Downtown skyline and land uses. The economic center began to shift from the courthouse to the south, eventually coalescing along the 7th Street corridor. This area became the commercial heart of the city.

Accelerated suburbanization occurred after the end of World War II and continued through the 1990's, and Fort Worth was no exception. Bold urban renewal plans and destruction of existing urban fabric (right) were typical of the period. Much of the southern portion of the Central Business District was transformed by the addition of a convention center and an elevated interstate highway. Intended to revitalize the area these projects had limited success. In response to the decline of Downtown, Charles Tandy and Sid Bass embarked on revitalization plans. Their vision continues to anchor a transformed Downtown as a vibrant commercial and cultural center.

Since the 1980's, Downtown has experienced a renaissance that has continued with investments by Sundance Square, XTO Energy, the City, the County and a variety of developers. Today, Downtown is experiencing significant interest in and around the core, as well as, on the periphery of the Downtown Design District. Downtown is a cultural and entertainment destination, and hosts the highest concentration of employment in Tarrant County. Substantial investment in

historic restoration, adaptive reuse, and new construction has created a rich blend of contemporary and classic architecture and an increasing diversification of land use.



Victor Gruen's plan, *A Greater Tomorrow*, for Downtown Fort Worth, completed in 1956. If implemented, the plan would have created a giant downtown mall.

# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT

## GENERAL DEVELOPMENT INTENT AND PRINCIPLES

### Intent

Downtown Fort Worth strives to build upon its image as the most vibrant, walkable, mixed-use urban center in the region by focusing on exceptional design of both private and public places. The Downtown Urban Design Standards and Guidelines (DUDSG) were developed to improve and protect the appearance, value, and function of downtown properties. The standards and guidelines allow for creativity and variety within a framework of basic design parameters that reinforce the best attributes of Downtown. The following principles serve as a basis for the standards and guidelines contained in this document. Projects are evaluated with respect to the principles, in addition to the pertinent standards and guidelines.

### General Design Principles

#### 1. Promote a pedestrian-oriented urban form

Focus on promoting a walkable urban form of development consistent with the character of Downtown. The focus on form promotes buildings that conform to tested urban design principles and that adapt to changing conditions over time.

#### 2. Maximize connectivity and access

The continued success of Downtown Fort Worth requires a multimodal circulation network for visitors, workers, and residents to conveniently walk, drive, bike, or ride mass transit to destinations within and outside the district. The DUDSG are intended to promote walkable blocks and street designs that balance these transportation modes and ensure accessibility for residents, employees, and visitors, including those with disabilities.

#### 3. Require excellence in the design of the public realm

The most successful urban environments are those where the street is appealing and memorable. Streets, plazas, parks, and other public spaces should be comfortable and inviting. Buildings fronting such spaces should be active and visually interesting at the pedestrian level.

#### 4. Support new and existing Downtown businesses

The DUDSG should primarily support the success of existing and new businesses.

#### 5. Encourage adaptive reuse and support the preservation of historically significant buildings

Downtown includes historically significant buildings. The DUDSG are intended to work in conjunction with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance in the City's Zoning Ordinance to encourage preservation and adaptive reuse of significant buildings.

#### 6. Encourage creativity, architectural diversity, and exceptional design

The design review process is intended to support creativity and exceptional design while discouraging uniformity, thus promoting high quality design.

#### 7. Promote sustainable development that minimizes negative impacts on natural resources

Creating a walkable, mixed-use, high-density, central city district supports sustainable development by providing an alternative to low-density development in peripheral areas. Downtown buildings, transportation systems, and public spaces should be designed to minimize negative impacts on air and water quality, and promote and showcase innovation in environmental design.

#### 8. Encourage the integration of art into public and private development

Art should be integrated into architecture, streetscapes, and public spaces. Art enhances the built environment and contributes to the area's success in attracting new residents and businesses.

# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT

## ADMINISTRATION

### Intent

The DUDSG apply to projects located within the Downtown Urban Design District (DUDD) (see map on page 9). The intent of the standards and guidelines is to encourage the highest level of design quality and provide the flexibility necessary to respond to existing site conditions. The DUDSG are intended to be clear, concise, and user-friendly. The development review process is meant to be predictable, flexible, and to facilitate the timely approval of conforming projects.

The DUDGS represent supplemental requirements to base zoning as outlined in this document. Whenever there appears to be a conflict between the DUDSG and the other sections of the Zoning Ordinance, the requirements specifically set forth in this document shall prevail.

Whenever a conflict between the Urban Design Commission and the Historic and Cultural Landmarks Commission regulations occur, the stricter of the two shall apply, or a joint session of the Boards and Commission may be called.

### Definition of “Standards” and “Guidelines”

Standards are objective, measurable regulations, sometimes illustrated through diagrams and sketches, with which all projects must comply. Unless noted as a guideline, all provisions in this document are standards. If a project of exceptional design is clearly consistent with the General Design Principles but does not conform to a certain standard, the Downtown Design Review Board (DDRB) may approve a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) that cites the project's compliance with those principles. For projects not conforming to height and setback regulations listed in the Zoning Ordinance for zoning other than H, a variance approved by the Board of Adjustment is required, in addition to the COA.

Design guidelines are more subjective statements through which the City proposes additional design strategies. The guidelines should be suitable for most projects, and developers should endeavor to ensure that guidelines are followed to the extent possible. City staff and the DDRB will work with developers to explore design approaches that maximize conformance with design guidelines. The DDRB shall not deny a COA solely because a project fails to comply with design guidelines.

### Downtown Design Review Board (DDRB)

The DDRB is composed of seven regular members and one alternate member, all of whom are appointed by the Mayor and the City Council. Members are charged with the administration of DUDSG. The Zoning Ordinance specifies that DDRB appointees should be qualified electors of the City of Fort Worth. Furthermore, by ordinance, board members and alternate must be selected from practicing professionals from the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design or planning, real estate, and a Downtown resident. The Planning and Development Director or designee serves as staff advisor to the DDRB.





# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

### Project Subject to Review

All private and public development projects within the DUDD that include additions, new construction, redevelopment (rehabilitation, renovation, or restoration), reconstruction of a parking lot, and new signage are subject to review by the Planning and Development Department staff and/or the DDRB for compliance with the DUDSG. Changes to the interior of buildings do not require staff/DDRB approval.

The DDRB may approve the application as submitted, approve the application with conditions, or deny the application. When conditions are attached to a project approval, the conditions will require modifications to the proposed design that are necessary to ensure the project's compliance with the design standards.



Above: Completed in 2013, Sundance Square Plaza has become a regional destination.

### Administrative Review vs. DDRB Review

Projects that are consistent with all applicable General Design Principles and conform to all standards may be approved administratively by the Planning and Development staff. Planning and Development staff will work with Downtown Fort Worth, Inc. (DFWI) to discuss each case. If staff and DFWI fail to agree on an application, the case may be sent to the DDRB for review. Staff may also refer an administrative case to the DDRB if DFWI and staff feel that it needs board review approval. The DDRB shall review projects that require interpretation or discretionary judgment with respect to the project's compliance with standards and guidelines.

#### Eligible for administrative approval:

- All signage that meets the standards
- Sidewalk construction, including trees, furnishing, landscaping, and pedestrian lighting
- Minor modifications to existing buildings
- Temporary construction facilities
- Historic buildings restored in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

#### DDRB will review the following:

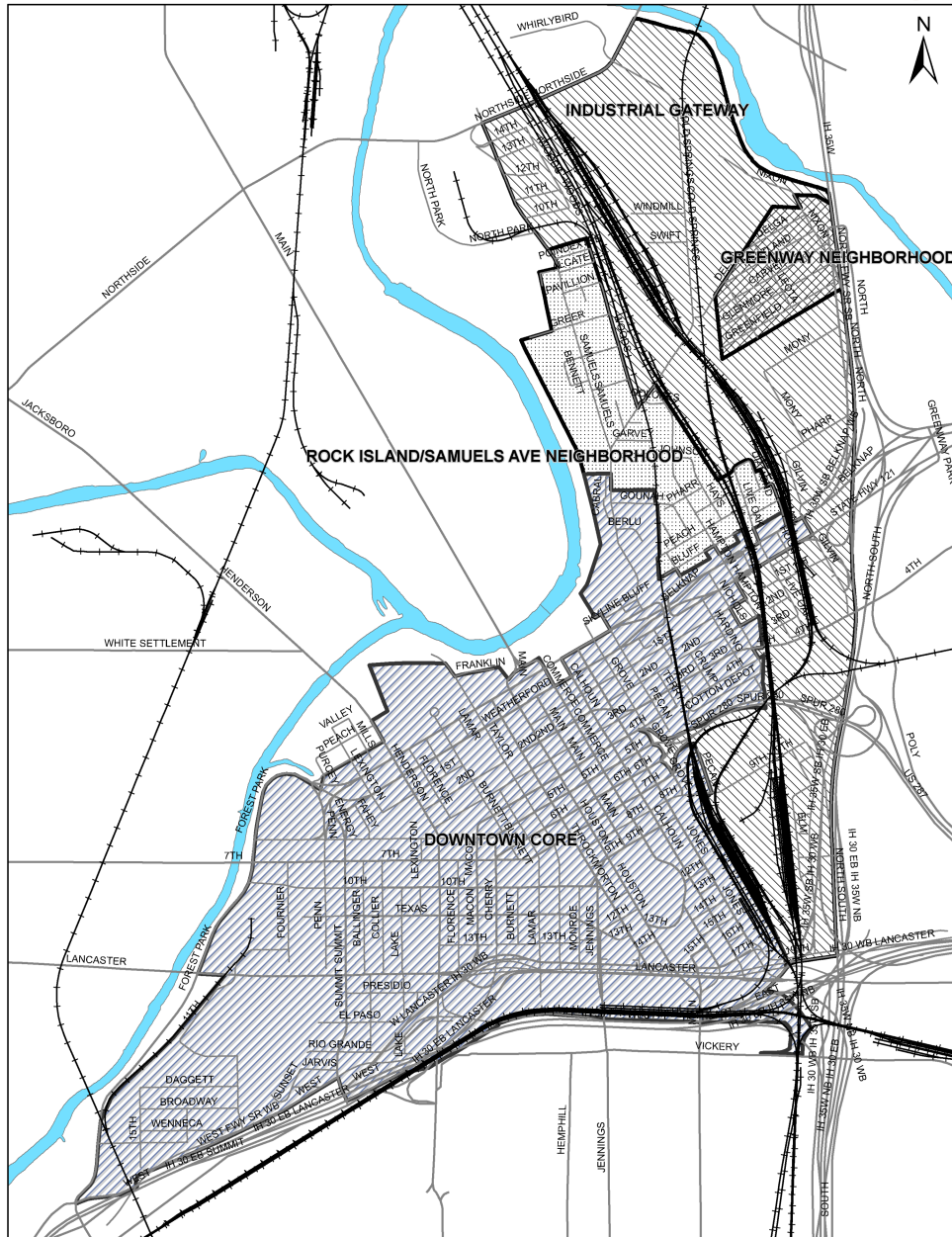
- New construction
- Major modification of buildings
- Items that staff refer to DDRB
- Cases that vary from standards

### Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)





The Planning and Development staff or the DDRB will issue a COA for approved public and private projects. The COA is valid for two years from the date of approval.

# DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN DISTRICT (DUDD) BOUNDARY

## Downtown Urban Design District - Character Zones



### Character Zones

-  DOWNTOWN CORE
-  GREENWAY NEIGHBORHOOD
-  ROCK ISLAND/SAMUELS AVE NEIGHBORHOOD
-  INDUSTRIAL GATEWAY



# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT

Character Zone	Uses Covered	Actions Triggering DUDSG Standards	Applicable Standards and Guidelines
<b>Downtown Core</b>	All Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any additions, new construction, redevelopment (rehabilitation, renovation, or restoration), reconstruction of a parking lot, and new signage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DUDSG requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Industrial Gateway</b>	Industrial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Base Zoning</li> </ul>
	Non Industrial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change of use from Light, Medium and Heavy Industrial uses to any other use listed in the Zoning Ordinance, or</li> <li>Rezoning to non-industrial category</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DUDSG Character Zone Standards for Commercial and Multifamily projects (see page 16)</li> <li>DUDSG requirements not covered by Character Zone Standards for Commercial and Multifamily projects</li> </ul>
<b>Greenway Neighborhood</b>	Commercial/ Multifamily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New construction, redevelopment (rehabilitation, renovation, or restoration), reconstruction of a parking lot, and new signage, or</li> <li>Rezoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DUDSG Character Zone Standards for Commercial and Multifamily projects (see page 17).</li> <li>DUDSG requirements not covered by Character Zone Standards for Commercial and Multifamily projects</li> </ul>
	Single Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New construction of a single family home, or</li> <li>The addition of more than 500 square feet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DUDSG Character Zone Standards for Single Family projects (see page 18).</li> </ul>
<b>Samuels Avenue/ Rock Island Neighborhood</b>	Commercial/ Multifamily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New construction, redevelopment (rehabilitation, renovation, or restoration), reconstruction of a parking lot, and new signage, or</li> <li>Rezoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DUDSG Character Zone Standards for Commercial and Multifamily projects (see page 21)</li> <li>DUDSG requirements not covered by Character Zone Standards for Commercial and Multifamily projects</li> </ul>
	Single Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New construction of a single family home, or</li> <li>The addition of more than 500 square feet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DUDSG Character Zone Standards for Single Family projects (see page 22)</li> </ul>

# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT

## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

### Required Information from Applicant

The full list of required documents is included in the application available from the City's Planning and Development Department. Applications are located online at:

[www.fortworthtexas.gov](http://www.fortworthtexas.gov)

For questions, comments, or to set an appointment call 817-392-8000.

### Review of Phased Projects

The DDRB may approve a COA for all phases, provided that the applicant submits drawings that depict the initial phase, as well as all future phases. There must be correlation between the initial presentation and all subsequent presentations of the project.

### Public Hearing Discussions

One of the DDRB's roles is to provide informal guidance to developers during the conceptual design phase. These conceptual design discussions take place during monthly DDRB public hearings, and provide an opportunity for early DDRB and staff input that should facilitate timely design review and approval of the final design phase. Developers of significant projects are encouraged to present conceptual designs to the DDRB. Submission of conceptual designs to staff or at a DDRB public hearing does not constitute approval of the project by the DDRB. Applicants are still required to receive approval by the DDRB for all work listed in the DUDSG except for projects that are eligible for administrative approval.

### Variances to Zoning Ordinance

The DDRB is authorized to approve waivers to the DUDSG, provided a project complies with applicable design standard intents. However, any waiver of basic property development standards related to building heights or setbacks requires a variance approved by the Board of Adjustment. Variances shall receive a recommendation from the DDRB.

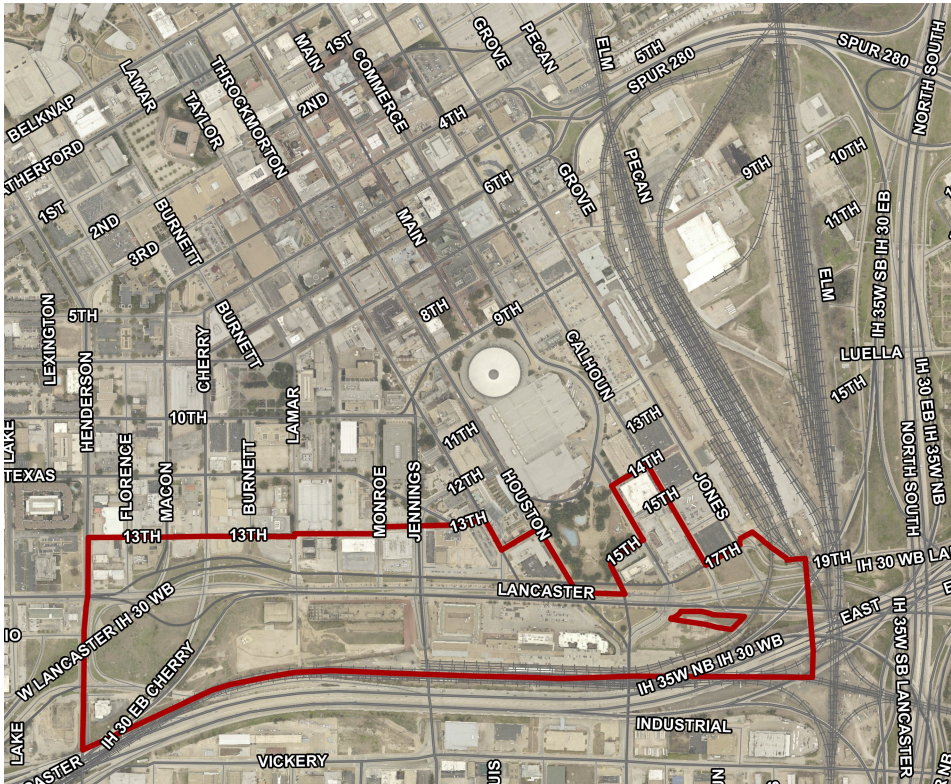


Unique projects are exceptions. The DDRB will determine the appropriateness of a project that does not conform to the DUDSG specified in this document. The design standards are written to respond to unique and creative project and waivers are encouraged to facilitate design excellence.





# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT



## Lancaster Corridor Zone

The Lancaster Corridor Redevelopment Project uses the redesign of Lancaster Avenue as a catalyst for redevelopment at the southern end of Downtown Fort Worth and as a means to connect Downtown more effectively with three grand historic structures on the south side of the street. The project is an outgrowth of the decision to relocate the I-30 and I-35W interchange to the south side of the Union Pacific railroad tracks and remove the I-30 overhead. The vision for the Lancaster corridor is for an attractive, liveable, and pedestrian-oriented district that capitalizes on streetscape enhancements, the renovation of historic structures, and an expanded downtown retail trade. A new downtown residential population, arts and entertainment activities, and vibrant public plazas will also help create a distinct district at the southern edge of Downtown.



These images illustrate the vision for Lancaster Avenue to be an attractive, livable, and pedestrian-oriented district that capitalizes on streetscape enhancements.



# UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRICT

## Lancaster Corridor Zone Supplementary Standards

In addition to all standards in the DUDSG, the following apply to the Lancaster Corridor:

### Building Height Standards

- Buildings shall be a minimum of 3 stories in height and a maximum of 8 stories in height.

#### **Varying from minimum and maximum height:**

- ♦ The DDRB may recommend to the Board of Adjustment heights that do not meet the standards above for any new or expanded building that, in the Board's determination, is proportional to the width of Lancaster Avenue, respects the scale of historic buildings along the street, and preserves view corridors to and from these historic buildings.

### Surface Parking Standards

- Surface parking lots and front yard parking are not allowed along Lancaster Avenue.
- Surface parking shall be located under, to the interior of, or behind buildings facing Lancaster Avenue.

### Parking Structures Standards

- Structured and/or underground parking shall be designed so that vehicular entrances and exits are not on Lancaster Avenue.
- Parking structures shall not front Lancaster Avenue.

#### **Exception:**

- ♦ The DDRB may allow parking structures to front Lancaster Avenue if the following conditions are met:
  1. The ground floor facing Lancaster Avenue contains retail space.
  2. The building is designed to complement surrounding buildings and to enhance pedestrian activity along Lancaster.

#### **NOTE:**

Using the criteria above, all height waivers shall receive a recommendation from the DDRB prior to receiving a variance from the City of Fort Worth Board of Adjustment:

## Streetscape Standards

- New streetscape items added shall be complementary to the existing streetscape. Streetscape items include the following:
  - ♦ Sidewalks (material use and color)
  - ♦ Lighting
  - ♦ Furnishings
  - ♦ Plant material

